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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 002151

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF BLOSSOM PERRY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/15/2013

TAGS: [ER](#) [ET](#) [PREL](#) [ET](#) [PREL](#) [UNSCER](#) [UNSC](#)

SUBJECT: EAST AFRICA: NIO HOUDEK'S DISCUSSIONS WITH ITALIAN
MFA OFFICIALS

CLASSIFIED BY: POL MC TOM COUNTRYMAN FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

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1. (C) SUMMARY: IN MAY 9 CONSULTATIONS IN ROME, NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (NIO) FOR AFRICA AMB. ROBERT HOUDEK FOUND A BROAD IDENTITY OF VIEWS WITH ITALIAN MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AMB. BRUNO CABRAS AND EAST AFRICA OFFICE DIRECTOR PAOLA IMPERIALE. CABRAS AGREED WITH HOUDEK THAT ETHIOPIA WOULD LIKELY ACCEPT THE BORDER DEMARCATION IN THE END, BUT EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR THE GREATEST POSSIBLE COORDINATION BETWEEN THE US AND EU TO ENSURE THIS HAPPENED. THEY AGREED IN THEIR ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUES THAT PRES. ISAIAS WOULD FACE ONCE THE BORDER ISSUE WAS FINALLY RESOLVED. AMB. HOUDEK SAID THAT THE USG PAYS CLOSE ATTENTION TO SOMALIA AS A TRANSIT POINT FOR TERRORISTS, BUT ARGUED THAT AL-QAEDA IS MORE INTERESTED IN KENYA, WHICH PROVIDES MORE OF THE MODERN INFRASTRUCTURE USEFUL FOR ITS OPERATIONS. CABRAS ARGUED FOR MORE FUNDING OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN SOMALIA, AS A MEANS OF PREVENTING AN ENTIRE GENERATION FROM TURNING TO ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM. HOUDEK COUNTERED THAT PROVIDING MORE RESOURCES MIGHT BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, GIVING THE COMPETING FACTIONS SOMETHING TO FIGHT OVER RATHER THAN A REASON TO COMPROMISE WITH EACH OTHER IN FORMING AN INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY

2. (C) EMBASSY ROME DEEPLY APPRECIATES EFFORTS OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL, STATE/AF AND OF COURSE AMB. ROBERT HOUDEK TO ARRANGE HIS STOP IN ROME. HIS CONSULTATIONS WITH THE MFA'S EAST AFRICA EXPERTS (DESCRIBED IN THIS CABLE) RESPONDED EFFECTIVELY TO A LONG-STANDING REQUEST OF THE MFA FOR AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON LONG-TERM ISSUES. HIS EXCHANGES WITH OTHER MFA AFRICA EXPERTS, AND WITH OTHER GOI SENIOR ANALYSTS, WERE NOT ONLY FASCINATING FOR US TO LISTEN TO, THEY ALSO DEMONSTRATED OUR INTENT TO KEEP UP CLOSE CONSULTATIONS
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AS ITALY PREPARES TO ASSUME THE PRESIDENCY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (JULY 1). AGAIN, OUR SINCERE THANKS!

ERITREA/ETHIOPIA BORDER DISPUTE

3. (C) CABRAS BEGAN BY ASKING AMBASSADOR HOUDEK WHETHER HE THOUGHT THE THREAT TO ETHIOPIAN PM MELES' LEADERSHIP FROM ACCEPTING THE EEBC'S VERDICT WAS REAL OR EXAGGERATED. HOUDEK RESPONDED THAT MELES IS SMART AND EXAGGERATES THE THREAT TO HIM IN ORDER TO FIND OUT IF THE US AND EUROPE WILL FIND A WAY TO HELP HIM ON BADME RATHER THAN RISK "LOSING" HIM. HE HAS THUS FAR MANIPULATED THE BORDER ISSUE TO WITHSTAND CHALLENGES TO HIS LEADERSHIP FROM HIS TIGRAYAN BASE. HIS DELAYING TACTICS HAVE DEMONSTRATED DOMESTICALLY THAT HE DID ALL HE COULD TO REVERSE THE DECISION. IN HIS GUT, HE KNOWS HE WILL ULTIMATELY HAVE TO RESPECT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S INSISTENCE THAT ETHIOPIA ACCEPT THE VERDICT. HOUDEK ALSO NOTED THAT MELES KNOWS THAT RENEWING THE WAR WOULD BE SUICIDAL TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. HOUDEK ASSESSED THAT THE WEST CAN BE SYMPATHETIC TO MELES' DIFFICULT SITUATION, BUT MUST BE FIRM AND UNITED IN INSISTING ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BORDER DEMARCATION.

4. (C) CABRAS AGREED WITH HOUDEK'S ANALYSIS OF MELES' MOTIVATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS. ETHIOPIA IS PLAYING ON THE TENDENCY OF WESTERN COUNTRIES TO LOOK FOR A MORE AGREEABLE SOLUTION TO ACCOMMODATE BOTH PARTIES. HOWEVER, SUCH ACTION WOULD NOT ONLY UNDERMINE INTERNATIONAL LAW, BUT ALSO SET A NEGATIVE PRECEDENT FOR FUTURE BORDER DISPUTE NEGOTIATIONS. THE EU HAD ALREADY REMINDED BOTH LEADERS OF THEIR AGREEMENT TO BE BOUND BY THE ARBITRATION; IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE EU
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AND US STICK CLOSELY TOGETHER. HOUDEK AGREED AND NOTED THAT ONCE MELES HAS ACCEPTED AND IMPLEMENTED THE VERDICT, THE U.S. AND THE EU MIGHT EASE THE EFFECTS OF THE DECISION FOR ETHIOPIA (E.G., WITH FUNDING OF RESETTLEMENT OF FAMILIES AND REPLACEMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE.)

5. (C) CABRAS ASKED HOW THE RESOLUTION OF THE BORDER DISPUTE WOULD AFFECT ISAIAS' DOMESTIC POSITION. HOUDEK RESPONDED THAT IT WOULD THROW ISAIAS BACK INTO THE "BOILING POT OF

DOMESTIC POLITICS;" TAKING AWAY THE BORDER DISPUTE FORCES ISAIAS TO ADDRESS DOMESTIC PROBLEMS SUCH AS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM. HOUDEK NOTED THAT ISAIAS HAS PROFOUND PROBLEMS WITH THE DIASPORA, A REMARKABLY SUCCESSFUL FOREIGN COMMUNITY IN THE U.S. ALTHOUGH THE DIASPORA IS RESTRAINED IN SPEAKING OUT PUBLICLY AGAINST THE ERITREAN GOVERNMENT (DUE TO THEIR FINANCIAL INTERESTS IN ASMARA), ISAIAS IS SLOWLY LOSING SUPPORT AMONG HIS OVERSEAS BRETHREN. CABRAS NOTED THAT ISAIAS IS AN EXTREMELY SOLITARY PERSON AND EVEN HIS FEW CLOSEST ASSOCIATES FOSTER AN INCREASING PARANOIA ABOUT THE WESTERN WORLD AND A CONSPIRACY AGAINST HIM. HOUDEK REMARKED THAT SINCE ASSUMING POWER ISAIAS HAS WANTED A CLOSER SECURITY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US AS A MEANS OF DETERRENCE. ACCORDING TO CABRAS, ISAIAS HAS BEEN UNABLE TO FOSTER SUCH A RELATIONSHIP BECAUSE OF HIS REFUSAL TO TALK WITH WESTERN OFFICIALS OVER A VARIETY OF INCIDENTS, SUCH AS HIS DECISION

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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	INL-00	PERC-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	EAP-00	EUR-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	DCP-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02
	OIG-03	OMB-01	DHS-00	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00
	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00
	EPAE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-01	G-00	SAS-00
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INFO IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

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TO EXPEL THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR FROM ERITREA.

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SOMALIA

16. (C) ASKED FOR AN ASSESSMENT OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY EMANATING FROM SOMALIA, HOUDEK NOTED THE U.S. VIEWS SOMALIA AS AN IMPORTANT TRANSIT POINT AND HIDING PLACE FOR TERRORISTS. HOWEVER, SOMALIA DOES NOT PROVIDE A HOSPITABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR A SUBSTANTIAL TERRORIST INFRASTRUCTURE BECAUSE THERE IS NO FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT THE TERRORISTS. KENYA, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS A SOPHISTICATED COUNTRY OFFERING EFFECTIVE PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE (I.E. BANKING, TELECOM, TRANSPORTATION) ENABLING TERRORISTS TO FUNCTION MORE EFFECTIVELY. ITS SECURITY SERVICES, WHILE WILLING, ARE NOT EFFECTIVE ENOUGH TO PREVENT TERRORISTS FROM USING KENYA, MORE THAN SOMALIA, AS AN OPERATIONAL BASE.

17. (C) ON SOMALIA RECONCILIATION EFFORTS, CABRAS NOTED THAT BOTH OUR CARROTS AND OUR STICKS ARE TOO SMALL TO MAKE THE FACTIONS SEE THE VALUE OF AN AGREEMENT. MEANWHILE, AN ENTIRE GENERATION IS GETTING ITS SOCIAL SERVICES, MOST IMPORTANTLY EDUCATION, FROM FUNDAMENTALIST ISLAMIC NETWORKS. PROVISION OF EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES IS IN THE WESTERN INTEREST, BUT ITALY AND THE EU ARE STRETCHED TOO THIN TO MAKE A MAJOR NEW EFFORT. HOUDEK QUESTIONED CABRAS' ASSERTION THAT RESOURCES AND PUBLIC SERVICES WOULD TRANSFORM SOMALIA. THE REAL PROBLEM IS THAT SOMALIS VIEW LIFE AS A ZERO SUM GAME AND, THUS, RELISH THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FOREIGNERS FOR THEIR OWN GAIN. THE SOMALIS WOULD BE OVERJOYED TO SEE COMPETITION BETWEEN THE WEST AND THE MUSLIM WORLD, A LA THE COLD WAR WHERE THE USG AND USSR COURTED THEM WITH RESOURCES. HOUDEK SUGGESTED THAT A POLICY OF BENIGN NEGLECT MIGHT DO MORE TO FORCE THE SOMALIS TO TAKE THE LEAD IN

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ADDRESSING THEIR OWN PROBLEMS.
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